

**James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, September 9,
1780, from Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe
Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W.
Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress**

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Richmond Sepr.9. 1780.

Dear Sir

Your kindness & attention to me in this & a variety of other instances has really put me under such obligations to you that I fear I shall hardly ever have it in my power to repay them. But believe me in whatever situation of life the chance of fortune may place me, no circumstance can happen wh. will give me such pleasure or make me so happy, at present or during my progress thro' life, as to have it in my power to convince you of the proper impressions they have made on me. A variety of disappointments with respect to the prospects of my private fortune previous to my acquaintance with yr Excellency, upon wh. I had built as on ground wh. cod. not deceive me & wh. fail'd in a manner wh. cod. not have been expected, perplex'd my plan of life & expos'd me to inconveniences wh. had nearly destory'd me. In this situation had I not form'd a connection with you I shod. most certainly have retir'd from society with a resolution never to have enter'd on the stage again. I cod. never have prevail'd on myself to have taken an introduction to the Country, or to have deriv'd any advantages or even to have remain'd in connection with one by whom I felt myself injur'd, but whose near relationship & situation in life put it in his power to serve me. In this situation you became acquainted with me & undertook the direction of my studies & believe me I feel that whatever I am at present in the opinion of others or whatever I may be in future has greatly arisen from yr. friendship. My plan of life is now

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fixd, has a certain object for its view & does not depend on other chance or circumstance further than the same events may affect the publick at at large. In the late instance when we were threatened by an invasion from the south , our prospects were so gloomy & the danger so imminent that I thought it the duty of every citizen to turn out & bear a part in repelling the invasion. The attention of yr Excellency & Council paid me in calling on me to perform the duties of so important a trust at so critical a time

if it had gone no further than intimating the good opinion you severally entertain'd of me, I knew did me honor & gave me more pleasure than any pecuniary compensation I cod.. Possibly derive from it. I was happy in undertaking the charge with a view of performing some service to the country & also of assuring you, that even in an affair wh. had so distant a relation to you, how effectually you might command my small services. My plan of taking nothing for any little service I might do the publick in this cause did not commence with my late employment: during the greater part of my service in the army I had not my expences borne, & as in this instance, I have only acted the part wh. the opinion of the duty I owe to the publick dictated & wh. many worthy Republicans are now acting without even a similar compensation, it is my wish not to deviate from it. Under the present direction my prospects are fix'd & altho' my private fortune is but small still it is sufficient for my maintenance in the pursuit of them. Colo. Dawson waited on me the other day & propos'd my bearing part with him in his present undertaking. I excus'd myself by every argument wch. my situation & the nature of his plan wod. admit of & had been happy to have evaded it altogether. I represented to him the nature of things in that country & that the ultimate advantage wh. the success of his plan cod. effect wod. be the driving the enemy into Chas.town from wh. they might advance so soon as the militia moulder'd away. I wish'd him, as Council are making every exertion in their power for the defence of that Country to change his view & rather form a corps within the state or one more immediately for its defence rather than to go in search of adventures more remote wh. promise at best but little advantage to our friends while it exhausts & weakens ourselves. But promis'd if he cod. get no one more capable or whose private circumstances wod. better dispense with

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their absence than myself, if his plan succeeded I woud. bear a part. If I can possibly avoid it I mean not to leave my study

a day, but if in the progress of things I shod. be so circumstanc'd as in yr opinion I ow'd it to myself or the publick to bear a part, so far as the publick interest will be forwarded by furnishing myself or the troops I command with necessaries so far I shall be happy to receive them. You will forgive the liberty I have taken in writing you a letter of this kind. Yr. kindness has really led me into it & at the same time it enables me to explain some part of my conduct I am happy that it gives an opportunity of assuring you how just a sense I have of yr good offices. I have the honor to be Dear Sir with great respect & esteem yr. sincere friend & very humble servt. Jas. Monroe

RC (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress)